UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/C.3/51/L.13
5 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
THIRD COMMITTEE
Agenda item 105

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

Cameroon*: draft resolution

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 50/149 of 21 December 1995,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General 1/ and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2/

Convinced of the necessity of strengthening the capacity within the United Nations system for the implementation of relief programmes for refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

Welcoming the ongoing process of voluntary repatriation of refugees in some parts of Africa,

Taking note of resolution CM/Res.1653 (LXIV) on refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the

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* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.

1/ A/51/367.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 12 (A/51/12).

Organization of African Unity at its sixty-fourth ordinary session, held at Yaoundé from 1 to 5 July 1996,

Recognizing the need for States to create conditions conducive both to the prevention of flows of refugees and displaced persons and to solutions, especially voluntary repatriation,

Bearing in mind that the majority of refugees and displaced persons are women and children,

Noting with great concern that despite all the efforts deployed so far by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and others, the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa, especially in the West African and Great Lakes region and in the Horn of Africa, remains precarious,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 1/ and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; 2/

2. Notes with concern that the effects of political instability, internal strife, human rights violations, poverty and natural disasters, such as drought, have led to increased numbers of refugees and displaced persons in some countries of Africa;

3. Expresses deep concern at the serious and far-reaching consequences of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons in the receiving countries and the implications for their security, their long-term socio-economic development and the environment;

4. Expresses its appreciation and strong support for those African Governments and local populations which, in spite of the general deterioration of socio-economic and environmental conditions, as well as over-stretched national resources, continue to accept the additional burden imposed upon them by increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons;

5. Expresses its concern at instances where the fundamental principle of asylum is jeopardized by the unlawful expulsion, refoulement, or threat to life, physical security, dignity and well-being of refugees;

6. Commends the Governments concerned for their sacrifices in providing assistance and protection to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons and for their efforts to promote voluntary repatriation;

7. Expresses its gratitude to the international community, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in particular, for the humanitarian assistance it has continued to render to refugees and displaced persons as well as to the countries of asylum;

8. Welcomes the strengthening of cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of African Unity at all levels, and urges the two organizations, in conjunction with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, the international community and the Governments concerned, to increase their efforts aimed at facilitating

voluntary repatriation in a dignified and orderly manner, as well as addressing the root causes of the refugee problem and working out modalities for a lasting solution;

9. Reiterates that the Plan of Action adopted by the Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region, held at Bujumbura from 15 to 17 February 1995, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/149, continues to be a viable framework for the resolution of the refugee and humanitarian problems in that region;

10. Calls upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other concerned entities to intensify their protection activities by, inter alia, supporting the efforts of African Governments through appropriate capacity-building activities, including training of relevant officers, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles and providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment or amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees;

11. Appeals to Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community to create conditions that can facilitate the voluntary return and the early rehabilitation and reintegration of refugees;

12. Appeals to the international community to respond positively to the third country resettlement requests of African refugees in the spirit of burden sharing;

13. Commends the Governments of the Great Lakes and West African regions and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their initiatives to promote repatriation within the framework of tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation of refugees in the region;

14. Encourages the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue to cooperate with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in emergency humanitarian situations in Africa;

15. Welcomes the ongoing efforts undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with host Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community in addressing the negative impacts of large-scale refugee influxes and concentrations on the environment and ecosystems of the asylum countries;

16. Notes with satisfaction the voluntary return of millions of refugees to their homelands following the successful repatriation and reintegration operations carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the cooperation and collaboration of many countries hosting refugees, and looks forward to other programmes to assist the voluntary repatriation of all refugees in Africa;

17. Expresses its concern about the long stay of refugees in certain African countries, and calls upon the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees to keep her programmes under review in those countries, taking into account the increasing requirements there;

18. Urges the international community to honour existing commitments and to continue to make efforts to increase financial and other contributions for general refugee programmes to keep pace with refugee needs;

19. Calls upon Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to strengthen the emergency response capacity of the United Nations system on the basis of the experience of the emergency in the Great Lakes region, and to continue to provide needed resources and operational support to refugees and asylum countries until a permanent solution can be found;

20. Calls upon the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by refugees in countries of asylum;

21. Requests all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to pay particular attention to meeting the special needs of refugee women and children;

22. Calls upon the Secretary-General, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations to increase the capacity for coordination and delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance and disaster relief in general with States and others concerned in respect of asylum, relief, repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, including those refugees in urban areas;

23. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, under the item entitled "Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions", and an oral report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997.